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PAGEANT: *A ROMAN BIRTHDAY*¹

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Dramatis Personae

A Roman Lady; A Roman Soldier; A Swaddled Baby;
Two or Three Roman Boys; As Many Fathers and Mothers;
A Little Sister; A Maid Servant;
A Priest; Three Flamens; Three Augurs;
Two Small Attendants.

SCENE I

A Roman Garden, set with chair and cradle. Enter from rear a Roman matron, bearing a swaddled baby. She places baby in cradle; seats herself, and gazes sadly into the distance.

DOMINA: Long' abest! Long' abest vir meus! Nescio utrum castra faciat, an bellum gerat, an . . . quod omen absit! . . . fortasse perierit! Utinam ad me redeat, atque ad hunc filiolum quem adhuc non vidit!

Enters hastily a maid servant.

ANCILLA: Domina! Domina mea! Dominus adest! Ecce! Iam in limine est!

DOMINA: Nunc Deo gratias ago!

She rises and advances a few steps. The Soldier enters opposite; they meet and embrace with silent emotion. Parting, each steps backward a single pace.

DOMINA: Salve, Domine!

MILES: Salve, carissima!

DOMINA: Ecce!

She steps back and signs to the maid servant, who lifts the swaddled child and lays it at the master's feet. The lady kneels beside the child, looking downward. The master looks from her to it; stoops, and lifts the child.

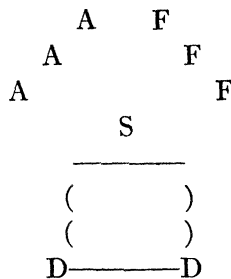
MILES: Filium habeo. Eum agnosco. Gente Claudius est; stirpe Marcellus; ei nomen Marco adiungo. En Marcus Claudius Marcellus!

¹ See under *Current Events*.

As he says the last words, he lifts the child solemnly (in a horizontal position) towards heaven. Slowly lowering him, he puts around his neck a bulla, mutely offered by the mother; and delivers him into the arms of the mother, who does not look up until then. She in turn puts him into the arms of the maid, and rises slowly. Taking the left hand of her husband in both hers, she goes off with him in direction opposite to entrance. The servant follows with the child.

SCENE II

A Slope on the Capitoline Hill; set with square altar, on which a fire of dry twigs is set but unlighted, and with the coop of sacred chickens. Enter in slow procession from rear, a small attendant; three augurs, bearing scrolls; a second small attendant; three flamens, with unlighted torches, a priest. The first attendant carries togas; the second a lighted brazier, smoking with incense. All take positions as marked in diagram.



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After a moment's silence, each bows his head forward, the priest veiling his with a square of white stuff given him by the first attendant, and lifting both hands, palm uppermost. Then he lifts his head and lowers his hands.

SACERDOS: Auspicia temptentur!

The three augurs come slowly forward. The first and second stand with backs toward each other (not too close), before the altar; each shades his eyes with his right hand, and looks intently upward. The third crosses to left, puts his hand into his breast, and draws out grain. The first attendant kneels down and opens the coop. The augur watches the cock closely. Presently he goes centre front, and all three augurs face the altar and priest.

AUGUR PRIMUS: Auspicia bona sunt!	} <i>All in loud tones of formal proclamation</i>
AUGUR SECUNDUS: Auspicia bona sunt!	
AUGUR TERTIUS: Auspicia optima sunt!	
SACERDOS: Auspicia deorum optima sunt!	

(*To augurs*): Bene dixisti. Abite.

The augurs and attendant go slowly back to their first positions. From either side begin to enter the boys, each with father and mother, or father alone. With one is a little sister, clinging to his hand. They stand in no regular order, facing the altar and priest. The priest's head is again bowed. When all have assembled, one father speaks.

PATER: Sacerdos! Sanctissime! Adsumus! Pueri Romani adsunt!

SACERDOS: Auspicia optima sunt. Estisne parati?

Pueri: Adsumus. Parati sumus.

SACERDOS: Progredimini.

The boys advance, and stand with bowed heads before the altar, not too close. The parents fall back to the right. The little sister pushes forward in the group to see, still holding fast to someone's hand.

SACERDOS: Non iam pueri estis, sed adulescentes. Vultisne pro patria vivere, pro patria pugnare, pro patria mori?

PUERI: Volumus.

PUER PRIMUS: Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori!

SACERDOS: Bene dixisti. Nolite iam pueri esse, sed viri. Cives Romani eritis omnes. O Iuppiter Maxime, O Quirine, cuius stirpe nos Romani orti sumus, hos accipiat, filios vestros!

He again lifts up level palms as he makes this prayer. Then to the boys he adds:

Posthac vobis non usus est his bullis, quae vestigia sunt pueritiae. Eas deponite.

One by one, the boys come forward and lay their bullas before the altar.

Accipite togas civium Romanorum.

Each boy puts off his "toga praetexta," and receives from the first attendant (discipulus) a "toga virilis," which he puts on with the assistance of the discipulus.

PUER SECUNDUS:

(As he puts off his toga praetexta):

Iterum clavum purpureum habebō cum Consul ero!

SACERDOS: Cives estis. Vos pro civibus agite. Valetē; valetē!

PUERI: Vale, sanctissime!

The boys rejoin their parents at the right. The little sister runs out to grasp her brother's hand.

SORORCULA: Ave, mi frater!

SACERDOS: Flammae novae in aris Patriae sunt. O Flamines, officiis satisfacite!

The three flamens come slowly forward; light their torches in turn at the brazier of the second discipulus, and, together, kindle the flame on the altar. As the fire burns up, the family groups, one by one, go off as they came; the little sister hanging back to the last moment to watch the altar and the priest. Finally the procession of priests also moves away, disappearing up the hill in single file, the flamens bearing high their lighted torches; the priest last.